

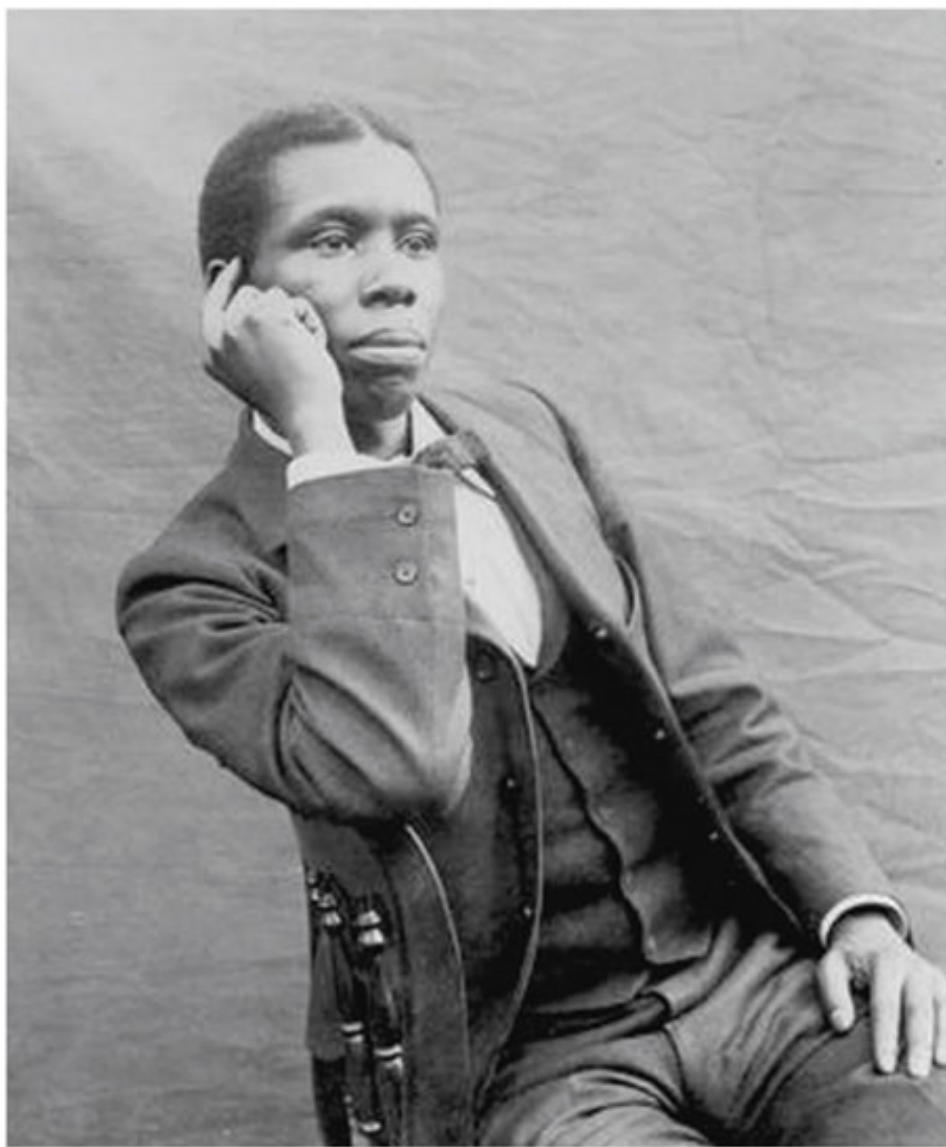
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Vocabulary Readers

Paul Laurence Dunbar, Poet



by Minnie Timent

Number of Words: 542

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Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 0-618-64966-2

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Paul Laurence Dunbar, Poet



by Minnie Timenti



Strategy Focus

As you read, **evaluate** how well the author explains Paul Dunbar's success as a poet.

Key Vocabulary

figurative language words that compare things in unexpected ways

lines rows of words

repetition repeating pattern of sounds, words, phrases, or lines

rhyme two or more words with the same last sound

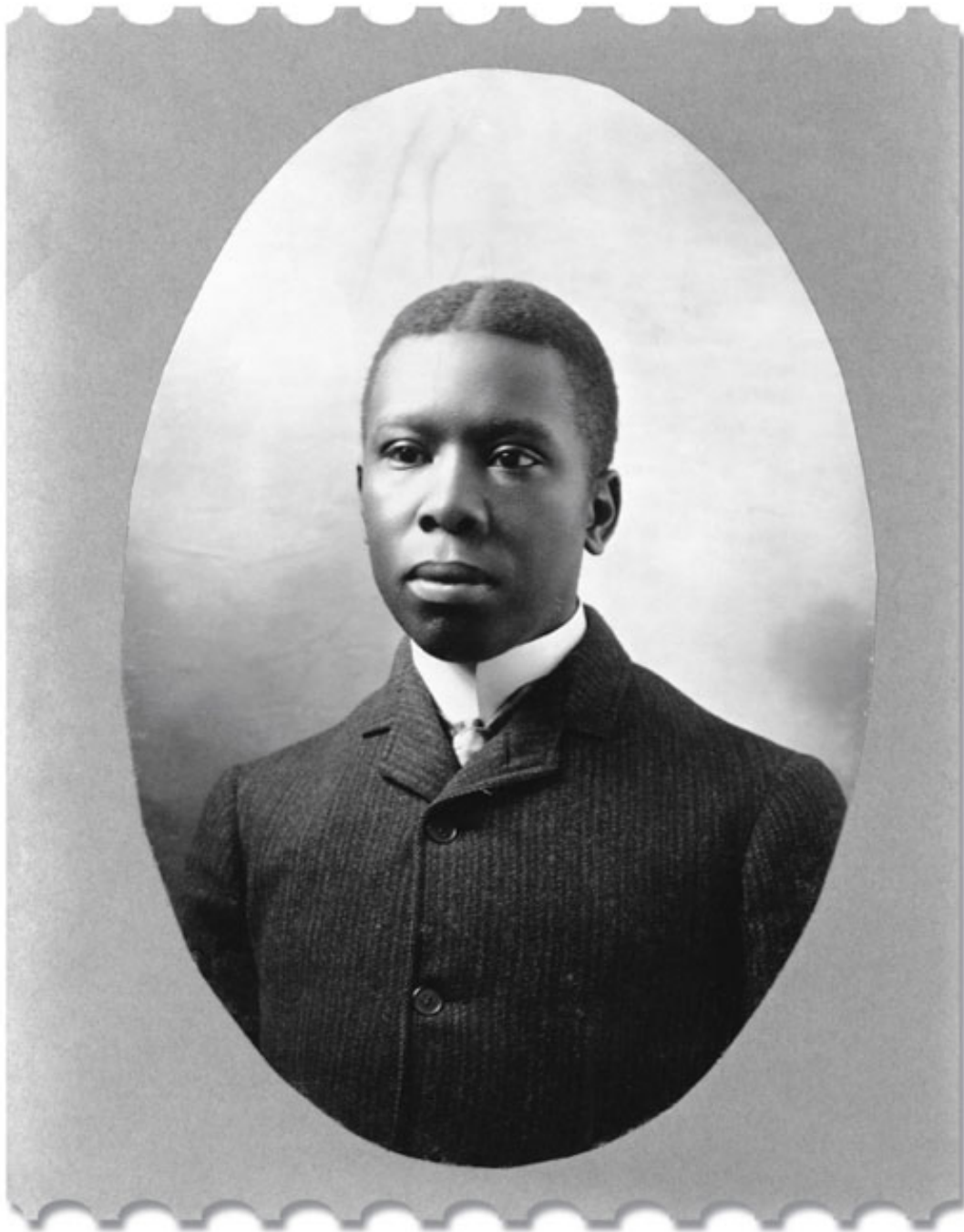
rhythm pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables

sensory language words that describe how things look, smell, feel, taste, and sound

Word Teaser

What do a lime, time, and slime have in common?

Paul Laurence Dunbar was a popular poet of the late 1800s and early 1900s. He was one of the first African American poets to become famous throughout the United States.



Paul Dunbar was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1872. His parents had been born into slavery, but he was born into freedom.

Paul's family was poor. Back then, most poor children had to quit school to go to work. But Paul did not want to give up his studies. He loved to read and write. He liked to put words together and listen to their sounds. His mother wanted him to keep learning, too. She worked long hours so he could stay in school.



A school in the late 1800's

Paul studied poems by great poets. At that time, most poetry used **rhyme**. Paul started writing his own poems, experimenting with rhyme. He ended **lines** with words like *be* and *thee*, *heart* and *part*.

Paul's teachers urged him to keep writing. They asked him to read his poems aloud at school assemblies. Everyone at school seemed to enjoy hearing them.



In high school, Paul wrote poems, articles, and essays. He was editor of his school newspaper. When he graduated, he hoped to work for a real newspaper. Unfortunately, he could only find a job as an elevator operator.

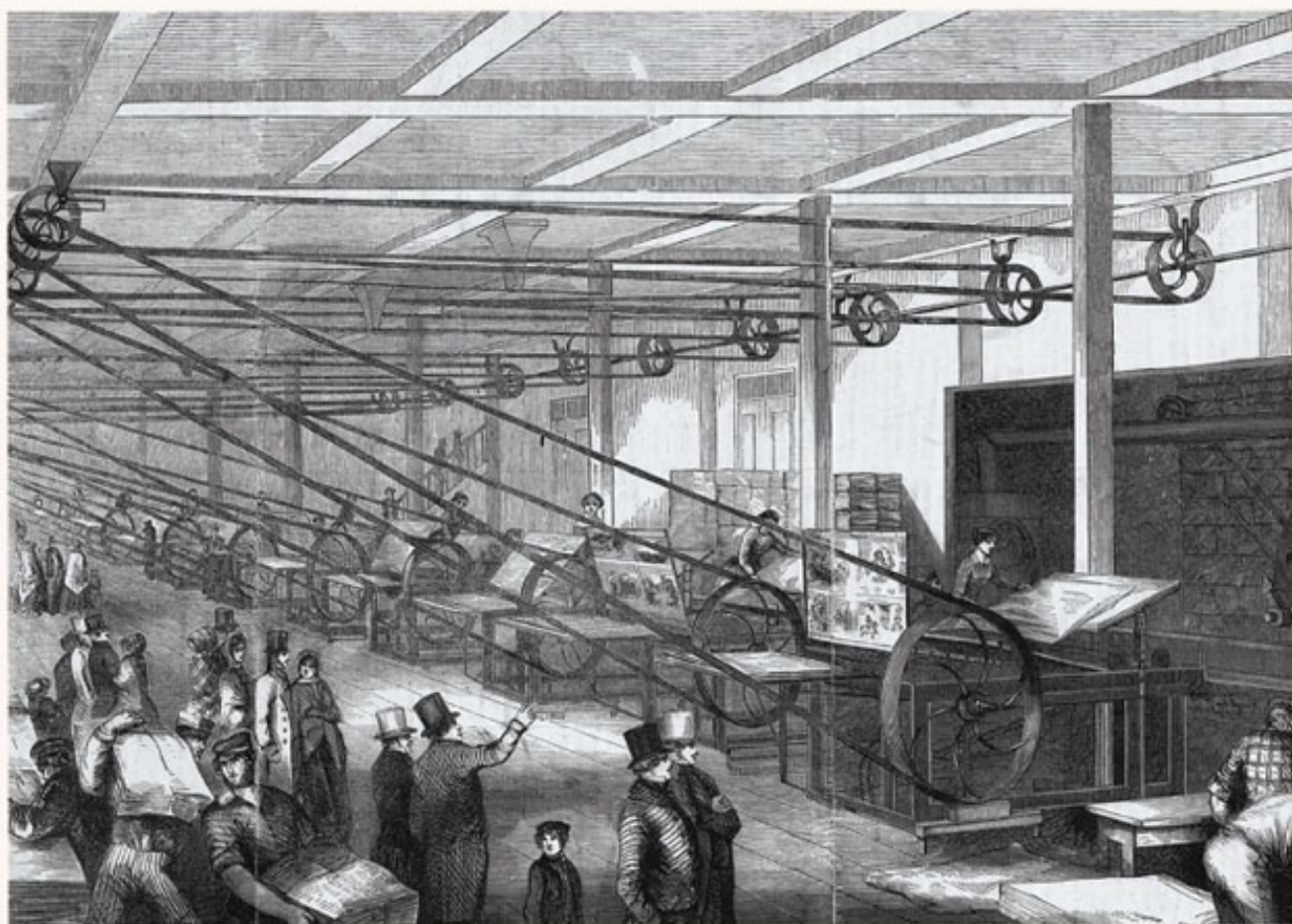
Still, Paul kept writing. Once in a while, a newspaper would publish a story or a poem he had sent in.



Paul was a star student at Dayton Central High School.

One of Paul's former teachers introduced him to a group of writers in Dayton. Paul wrote a poem and shared it at one of the writers' meetings. The writers liked his poetry. They asked to see more.

One well-known writer even put some of Paul's poems in a newspaper column. Readers all over the country read them.



A newspaper being printed
in the early 1900s.

Paul Dunbar published his first book of poems in 1892. He sold copies of the book to people who rode his elevator. He also recited his poems at clubs and in churches.

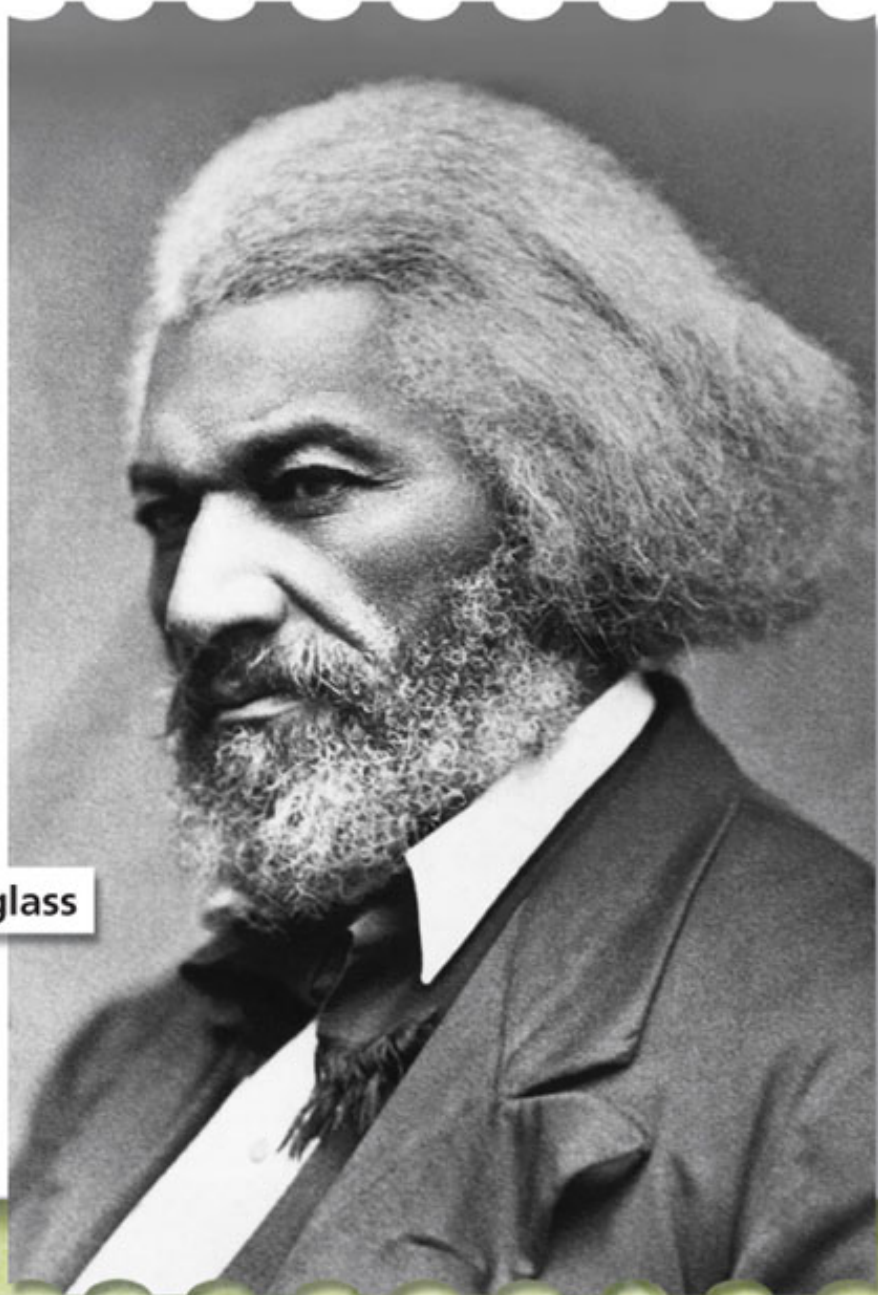
Dunbar's poems appealed directly to people's senses and emotions. He used **sensory language** to describe how things felt, tasted, looked, smelled, and sounded. The beat of the syllables, or **rhythm**, added to the feelings and moods of his poems. The **repetition** of different words and lines helped stress certain ideas.



The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois, where Paul met Frederick Douglass.

In 1893, Dunbar met Frederick Douglass, the great anti-slavery leader. Douglass praised Dunbar's poetry and encouraged the young poet.

When Douglass died, Dunbar wrote a powerful poem about this famous man. Dunbar used **figurative language** in the poem. He said African Americans were like a sorrowful mother who had lost her son.

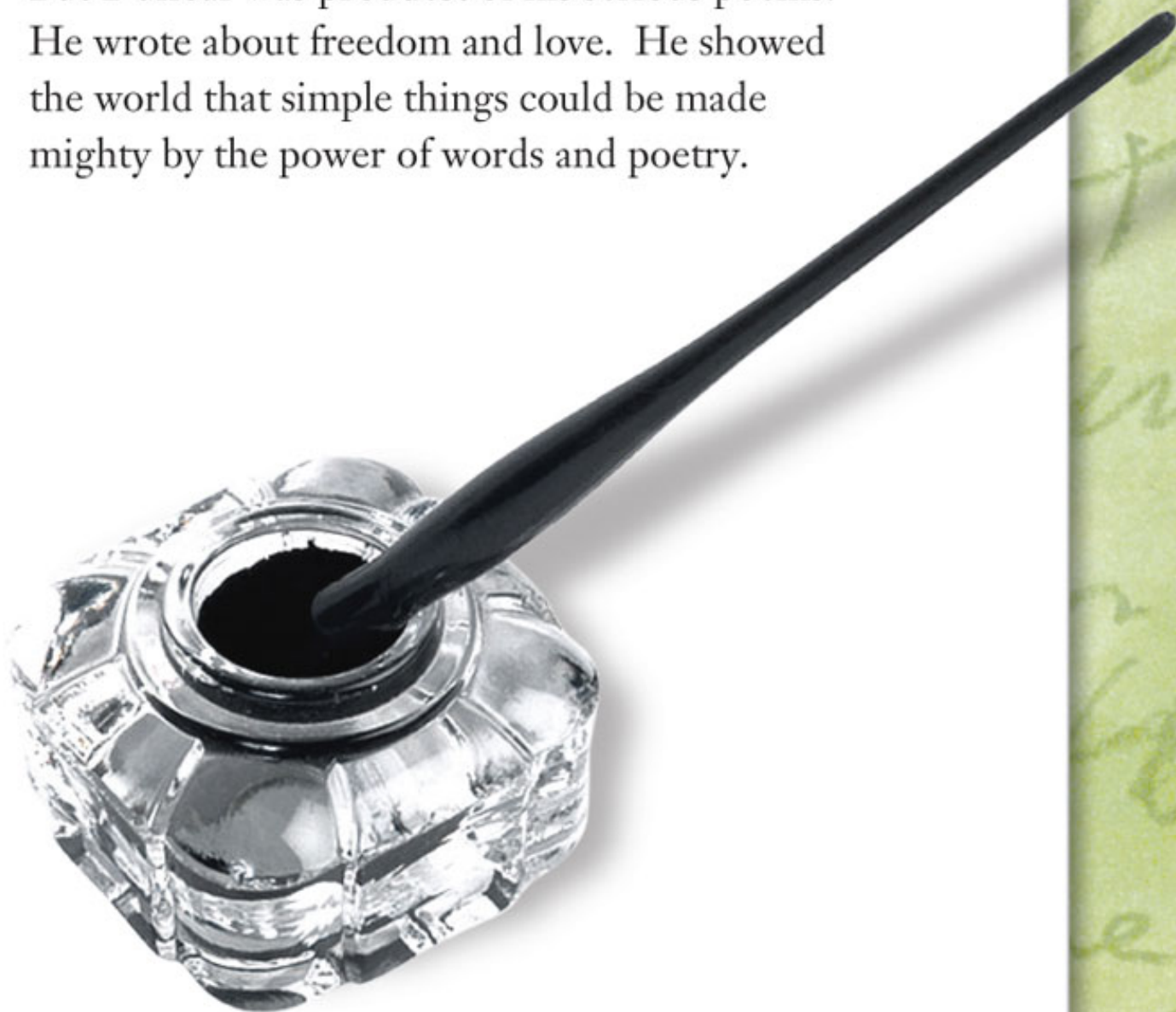


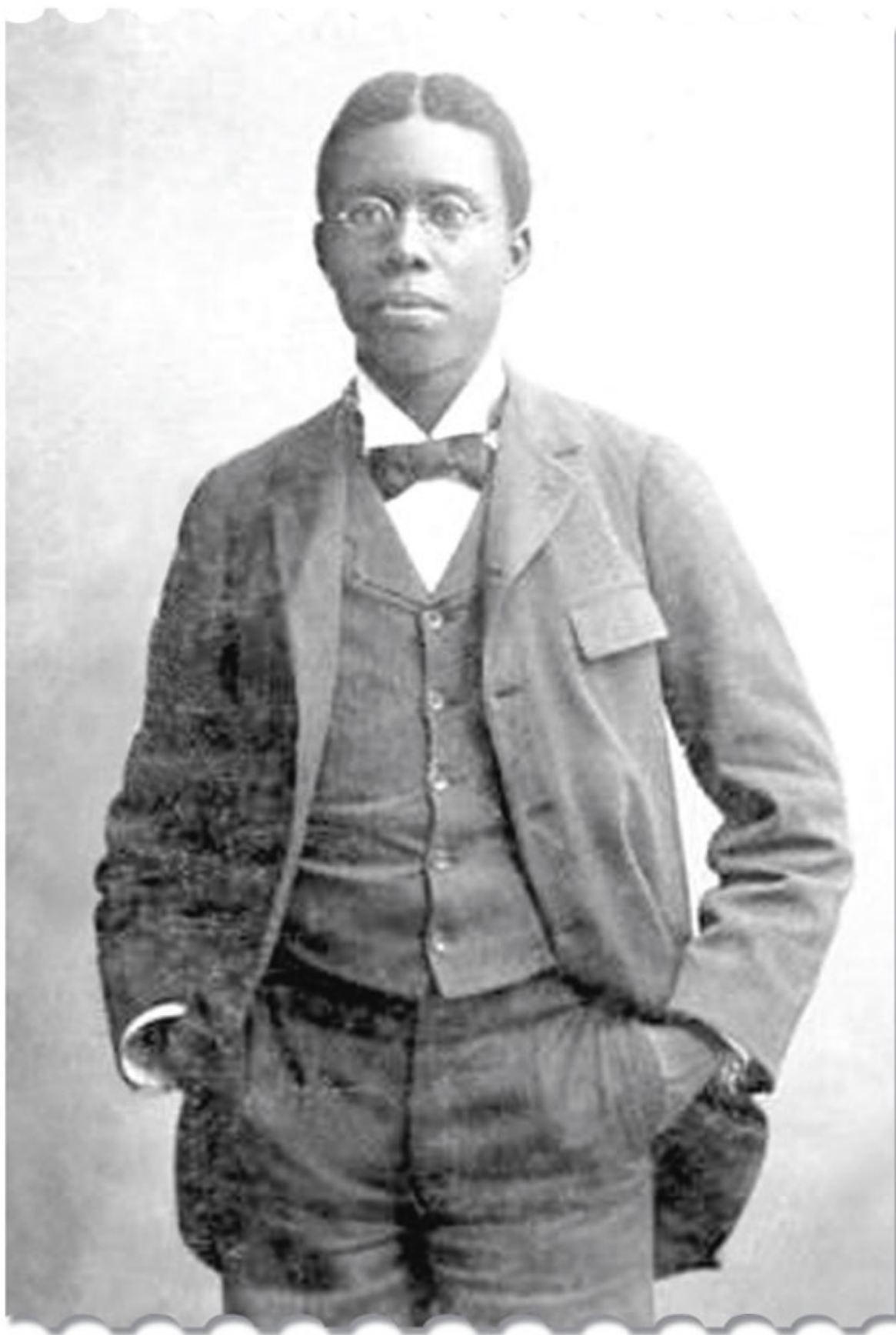
Frederick Douglass

By the time Dunbar was in his mid-twenties, famous writers and poets were talking about his poetry. Dunbar traveled across the country and overseas to read his poems.

Then, when Dunbar was in his early thirties, he grew ill with lung disease. He could no longer travel and share his poems. But he continued to write, right up until his death at age 33.

Many of Dunbar's poems were lively and funny. But Dunbar was proudest of his serious poems. He wrote about freedom and love. He showed the world that simple things could be made mighty by the power of words and poetry.





Responding

Putting Words to Work

1. How is **rhythm** important in a poem?
2. How are **lines** in a poem different from sentences?
3. Do you prefer poems that **rhyme** or those that don't rhyme?
Explain your answer.
4. Complete the following sentence:
Poets often use **figurative language** to _____.
5. **PARTNER ACTIVITY:** Think of a word you learned in the text. Explain its meaning to your partner and give an example.

Answer to Word Teaser

they all **rhyme**

Word Builder

How would you include **sensory language** in a poem?

Copy this chart. At the top of the chart, write the name of something to describe—*messy room*, *snowstorm*, *pigeon*, *bowl of spaghetti*, or anything you wish. Then complete the chart by adding descriptive words.

What I want to describe: _____	
sight	
sound	
touch	
smell	
taste	

Write About It

Write a poem about the thing you described in your Word Builder chart. Use some of the words from the chart in your poem.

Key Vocabulary

figurative language

lines

repetition

rhyme

rhythm

sensory language

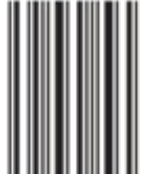
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